

# The Healthy Mentality

A mental health newsletter courtesy  
of North Central West Virginia Community Action

## Holidays and Stress

December 2018

### In this Newsletter:

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- Early Childhood Positive Behavior Implementation and Support
- Reading is FundaMental

The holidays are a joyous time of year, but they can also be a very stressful time of year. The following tips are from an article titled, "Stress, depression and the holidays: Tips for coping" from the Mayo Clinic. For the complete article please go to <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/stress-management/in-depth/stress/art-20047544>

When stress is at its peak, it's hard to stop and regroup. Try to prevent stress and depression in the first place, especially if the holidays have taken an emotional toll on you in the past.

**1. Acknowledge your feelings.** If someone close to you has recently died or you can't be with loved ones, realize that it's normal to feel sadness and grief. It's OK to take time to cry or express your feelings. You can't force yourself to be happy just because it's the holiday season.

**2. Reach out.** If you feel lonely or isolated, seek out community, religious or other social events. They can offer support and companionship. Volunteering your time to help others also is a good way to lift your spirits and broaden your friendships.

**3. Be realistic.** The holidays don't have to be perfect or just like last year. As families change and grow, traditions and rituals often change as well. Choose a few to hold on to, and be open to creating new ones. For example, if your adult children can't come to your house, find new ways to celebrate together, such as sharing pictures, emails or videos.

**4. Set aside differences.** Try to accept family members and friends as they are, even if they don't live up to all of your expectations. Set aside grievances until a more appropriate time for discussion. And be understanding if others get upset or distressed when something goes awry. Chances are they're feeling the effects of holiday stress and depression, too.

**5. Stick to a budget.** Before you go gift and food shopping, decide how much money you can afford to spend. Then stick to your budget. Don't try to buy happiness with an avalanche of gifts. Try these alternatives:

- Donate to a charity in someone's name.
- Give homemade gifts.
- Start a family gift exchange.

**6. Plan ahead.** Set aside specific days for shopping, baking, visiting friends and other activities. Plan your menus and then make your shopping list. That'll help prevent last-minute scrambling to buy forgotten ingredients. And make sure to line up help for party prep and cleanup.

**7. Learn to say no.** Saying yes when you should say no can leave you feeling resentful and overwhelmed. Friends and colleagues will understand if you can't participate in every project or activity. If it's not possible to say no when your boss asks you to work overtime, try to remove something else from your agenda to make up for the lost time.

**8. Don't abandon healthy habits.** Don't let the holidays become a free-for-all. Overindulgence only adds to your stress and guilt. Try these suggestions:

- Have a healthy snack before holiday parties so that you don't go overboard on sweets, cheese or drinks.
- Get plenty of sleep.
- Incorporate regular physical activity into each day.

**9. Take a breather.** Make some time for yourself. Spending just 15 minutes alone, without distractions, may refresh you enough to handle everything you need to do. Find something that reduces stress by clearing your mind, slowing your breathing and restoring inner calm. Some options may include:

- Taking a walk at night and stargazing.
- Listening to soothing music.
- Getting a massage.
- Reading a book.

**10. Seek professional help if you need it.** Despite your best efforts, you may find yourself feeling persistently sad or anxious, plagued by physical complaints, unable to sleep, irritable and hopeless, and unable to face routine chores. If these feelings last for a while, talk to your doctor or a mental health professional.

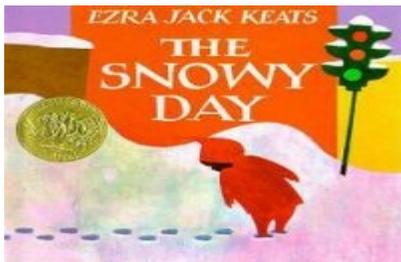
## Early Childhood Positive Behavior Implementation and Support

Early Childhood Positive Behavior Implementation and Support (ECPBIS) is a process that supports our children's positive social and emotional growth. Sometimes, children demonstrate challenging behaviors. The Center for Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation identifies that “Children might have challenging behavior because they have not developed social skills or don’t understand the rule, social expectation, or behaviors that are expected within a situation.” In Head Start/Early Head Start we utilize the ECPBIS process to support children, parents and teachers to increase positive behaviors in the classroom and home. If you are interested in this practice, please speak to your teacher, FCE staff, or the Mental Health Program Specialist, Fe Whoolery, for more information.

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## Reading is FundaMENTAL:

Books can be a great way to connect with your child while learning valuable life skills. This month's suggested book is: *The Snowy Day* by Ezra Jack Keats



Curl up with your little one and read *The Snowy Day* by Ezra Jack Keats. This delightful book follows a young child as he explores his city covered in snow. Talk to your child about how snow makes them feel and what it will look like outside when the snow begins to fall. Soon enough we will really get to see a winter wonderland.

### We Teach

“If a child doesn’t know how to read, we teach.  
If a child doesn’t know how to swim, we teach.  
If a child doesn’t know how to multiply, we teach.  
If a child doesn’t know how to drive, we teach.  
If a child doesn’t know how to behave, we...

....teach ....punish?

Why can’t we finish the last sentence as automatically as we do the others?”

~Tom Herner, NASDE President

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